

Back Bay Station  
145 Dartmouth Street  
Boston  
Suffolk County  
Massachusetts

HABS No. MA-1107

HABS  
MASS.  
13- BOST,  
96-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

BACK BAY STATION

HABS  
MASS,  
BOST,  
96-

HABS No. MA-1107

Location: 145 Dartmouth Street, Boston, Massachusetts

Present Owner: Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, 50 High Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02110.

Present Occupant: Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority.

Present Use: Railroad passenger terminal. Demolished after 1979.

Significance: This station stands where the Boston and Providence Railroad and the Boston and Albany Railroads originally crossed in the middle of the Back Bay's waters. It has been the site of a major passenger station since 1899.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1928-9.
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The Boston and Providence Railroad and the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad acquired the land and houses on the area during the years 1896-99 from various owners.

B. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Annual Reports of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railway  
Boston Globe, 7-2-29

Boston Post, 7-2-29

Suffolk County Registry of Deeds, Suffolk County Court House,  
Boston, Massachusetts.

2. Secondary and published sources:

The Hen or the Egg?, Romance of Rhode Island History, A Radio Presentation by the Phenix National Bank of Providence on 9-17-45.

The New Haven Railroad: Its Rise and Fall; John L. Weller,  
Hastings House Publishers, New York, 1969.

Prepared by: Jean A. Follett  
Research Assistant  
Kaiser Engineers Inc./Fay,  
Spoffard and Thorndike  
September, 1979

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: While simple in design this building combines the use of symbolic ornamentation with a functional design.
2. Condition of fabric: Very good.

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Approximately 60' X 60', two stories tall, and trapezoidal in shape.
2. Wall construction, finish and color: Red brick with artificial stone details.
3. Foundation: Set over the tracks on a series of vaults. The vaults are brick and rise from steel I-beams, which are then in turn supported at approximately 40' intervals by I-beams encased in concrete.
4. Porches: A metal and glass canopy is over the Buckingham Street vehicle entrance.
5. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Dartmouth Street has seven entrances, one in each of the end bays with an arched concrete surround and a semi-circular pierced grill above. A door is located in each of the four, tripartite, store fronts. The store fronts are plate glass windows on either side of a recessed glass door. The central entrance to the Waiting Room is contained in a large two-story arch with a concrete surround. The upper section of windows in this arch is separated from the three glass doors in the lower section by a broad, iron panel concealing the spandrel. Doors replaced. This entrance is flanked by less ornate, one story and arched entrances.

Buckingham Street facade: Two double glass doors on either side of the central pavilion open into a passage to the Waiting Room. A thin band of iron panels separates the transom from the doors. Doors replaced.

Clarendon Street facade: Two double glass doors to the left and right of the center. A single door in the southern (left-hand) bay. Two delivery doors into the baggage room wing. Doors replaced.

- b. Windows: Dartmouth Street includes at least one window to each bay on the second floor, and two to each bay above the squared entrances. The windows have eight panes which flip open in horizontal pairs. Windows have either artificial stone surrounds or brick lintels and artificial stone sills.

6. Roof:

- a. Shape: Flat.
- b. Cornice: Concrete Parapet

C. Description of Interior:

- 1. Stairways: Five sets of iron stairs lead to the tracks below. Three sets of interior stairs to the second floor opening leading directly to the outside through the doors in the end bays.
- 2. Flooring: Red terra cotta in public lobby.
- 3. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster walls with pilasters set on 4' high white marble plinths with garlanded capitals. Interior of north wall includes three tall round arched windows, the center one being flanked by round, eagle ornamented emblems.

The ceiling has deep beams running from the capital of each pilaster, with the center area recessed deeper than the rest.

- 4. Notable original furniture: Ticket and information booths include smooth brass and marble composition.

D. Site:

- 1. General setting and orientation: The main entrance faces west, southwest on Dartmouth Street, with the entire building sitting above the railroad tracks.

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PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Department of Transportation in compliance with Executive Order 11593 and a Memorandum of Agreement with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. John A. Burns, AIA, was the HABS project coordinator. Photographs were taken by Richard Cheek in October 1979. The written data was compiled by Jean A. Follet, Research Assistant for Kaiser Engineers Inc./Fay, Spofford and Thorndike in September 1979. This documentation was prepared for transmittal to the Library of Congress by Robert S. Lange of the HABS staff in August 1980.